

“Making the First State Shine: 50 Years of Historic Preservation in Delaware”

-18th annual Chautauqua to take place in Lewes, Del. from June 19 to 23, 2016-

(DOVER, Del.–June 7, 2016)–From June 19 to 23, 2016, the [Zwaanendael Museum](#), in partnership with the [Lewes Historical Society](#), will sponsor the 18th Annual Chautauqua–“Making the First State Shine: 50 Years of Historic Preservation in Delaware,” a five-day series of activities celebrating [Preservation50](#), the 50th anniversary of the passage of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. Events and programs will take place at a variety of downtown Lewes, Del. locations. Except where noted, admission is free and open to the public. Go here for a [complete listing of activities](#). For additional information, call 302-645-1148.



Peyton Dixon will portray President Teddy Roosevelt on June 19, 2016.

A unique mixture of education and entertainment, Lewes' Chautauqua will be headlined by re-enactors from the [American Historical Theatre](#) who will take on the personas of celebrated historical figures, educating and entertaining audiences as they bring the past to life. Audience members are encouraged to ask questions and interact with the featured characters who will include president and preservationist Teddy Roosevelt; philanthropist Abby Aldrich Rockefeller who was a leader in the restoration of Colonial Williamsburg; and Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, who as first lady recognized and promoted historic preservation including the restoration of the White House.



Additional historic-preservation-related activities include cemetery and historic-house tours; a tour of the [Lightship Overfalls](#); a bus trip to historic New Castle, Del. (admission charge); and lectures on a wide variety of topics including the National Register of Historic Preservation, tax credits for the preservation of historic properties, and sites in Delaware listed in the "Green Book," a travel and vacation guidebook for people of color during the segregation era. The 2016 Chautauqua will also include concerts, an Old Time Radio Show presented by the [Ad Hoc Touring Company](#); and a Worship Experience by the [Singing and Praying Bands of Maryland and Delaware](#).



Members of the Singing and Praying Bands of Maryland and Delaware will conduct a Worship Experience on June 23, 2016 at St. George's AME Church. Photo by Edwin Remsberg, Courtesy of Maryland State Arts Council.

Chautauqua takes its name from a series of adult education programs that were first held at a campsite on the shores of Lake Chautauqua in upstate New York during the late-19th century. Chautauquas spread throughout America in the late-19th and early-20th centuries bringing speakers, teachers, musicians, entertainers, preachers and specialists of the day to a wide cross-section of the nation's rural and small-town population. Circuit Chautauquas (also known as Tent Chautauquas) were an itinerant manifestation of the movement. Programs would be presented in tents pitched in a field near town. After several days, the Chautauqua would fold its tents and move on to the next community. The popularity of Chautauquas peaked in the mid-1920s, after which radio, movies and automobiles brought about the gradual disappearance of the movement by the 1940s.

Reborn in the 1970s as a vehicle for humanities education, modern Chautauquas are organized around a core program in which re-enactors portray celebrated historical figures, speaking and interacting with audiences. Modern Chautauquas have been presented annually in Delaware since 1999 featuring a wide variety of historical figures including Abigail Adams; Abraham Lincoln; Amelia Earhart; Dolley Madison; Eleanor Roosevelt; Edgar Allan Poe; the Lone Ranger; John Philip Sousa; and Delaware's own Pvt. James Elbert, Maj. Allen McLane, F.O.C. Darley and Clifford Brown.

Delaware's 2016 Chautauqua is partially funded by a grant from the [Delaware Humanities Forum](#), a state program of the National Endowment for the Humanities. It is being presented as a partnership between the Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs, the Lewes Historical Society and the Lewes Chamber of Commerce. Additional financial support is provided by Delmarva Power and Sussex County Council under the auspices of Councilwoman Joan Deaver.



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Contact:

Jim Yurasek

Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs

Phone: 302-736-7413

E-mail: Jim.Yurasek@delaware.gov

Web: <http://history.delaware.gov>